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INFO RUEHZU/ASIAN PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/EX AND EAP/MTS
STATE PASS USAID

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: RAPID RESPONSE TO TYPHOON FRANK

¶1. Summary: Typhoon Fengshen (called Frank under Philippine naming conventions) hit the Philippines on June 21, with a current death toll of at least 229 dead, 800 missing, and damage of property in 20 Philippine provinces. The death toll is expected to rise significantly due to the sinking of the ferry Princess of the Stars, which capsized with at least 800 passengers and crew on board. Only a small number of survivors have been reported from the ferry, and just a few victims have been recovered. There were no U.S. Mission casualties or damage to U.S. property, and no American Citizen deaths have been confirmed so far. The Mission has requested disaster assistance funds of \$100,000 for the Philippine Red Cross, and the U.S. Navy will provide search-and-rescue assets as of Tuesday, June 24, at the request of the Philippine government to assist the Philippine Coast Guard and Navy with the capsized ferry. Mission's press statement follows at paragraph 6. End Summary.

¶2. On June 21, Typhoon Frank raked 20 provinces in the Philippines, affecting half a million people, 70,000 of whom are now in evacuation centers. The reported death toll is 229, but that number will climb as bodies are recovered. In addition to devastation caused by floods, storm surge, and landslides, the ferry Princess of the Stars sank with 742 known passengers and 130 crew members on the manifest. According to the National Disaster Coordination Council, the initial property damage estimate is \$22 million and includes destroyed or damaged homes, school structures, and crops. However, this number may rise as more information becomes available. Winds of up to 150 mph, flood waters, and falling debris caused additional damage to bridges, roads, electric posts, and antennas, which has not been fully assessed.

PACOM Providing Assistance

¶3. The U.S. Navy vessel USNS Stockham, with two search-and-rescue capable helicopters, small boats, and an underwater scuba team, is being repositioned and will arrive around 5 AM on June 24 near Sibuyan Island where the ferry sank. A P-3 maritime surveillance aircraft is also available, should the Philippines request images to pinpoint wreckage and possible survivors.

Status of American Citizens

¶4. No U.S. residents in the Philippines reported injuries resulting from the typhoon. American Citizen Services has been in close touch with Philippine authorities and is scrutinizing the ferry's manifest for U.S. citizen passengers, while coordinating efforts with other embassies (sepemail to CA/OCS). Peace Corps contacted its volunteers to verify that they were not harmed. Communications remain difficult, and there is one volunteer who has not been contacted yet: all others are accounted for and unharmed.

U.S. Government Assistance to Philippines

15. Cabinet Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita conveyed to Charge the Philippine government's desire for assistance from the USG. This was followed by an official request from the National Disaster Coordinating Council which is charged with carrying out relief efforts. Based on these requests and the magnitude of the damage from the typhoon, Charge has requested the release of the Ambassador's disaster assistance fund to provide to the Philippines Red Cross (PRC) with \$50,000, and USAID is seeking an additional \$50,000 from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) (septel). Post plans to donate the funds to the Philippine Red Cross to support the organization's immediate needs for water, hygiene supplies, food, and blankets in affected communities. Post will continue to update Department on further assistance requests from the Philippine government.

Press Statement

16. Mission released the following press statement June 23.

US ASSISTANCE IN AFTERMATH OF TYPHOON FRANK

The United States extends its sympathy to all who have been affected by Typhoon Frank (Fengshen) and its aftermath in the Republic of the Philippines. We deeply regret the loss of life both on land and from the sinking of the ferry, Princess of the Stars.

The U.S. government has offered assistance to the Philippine

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authorities in carrying out rescue and recovery operations. The U.S. Pacific Command has directed the USNS Stockham, with search and rescue helicopters aboard, to proceed to Sibuyan Island to be available to assist with rescue and recovery efforts for the passengers and crew of the Princess of the Stars. We anticipate that the helicopters will be in position to begin operations later today. Additionally, the U.S. Pacific Command has directed a U.S. Navy P-3 maritime surveillance aircraft to proceed to Clark International Airport to join in this effort. It should arrive later today and will be prepared to participate shortly after that.

In addition, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) will be providing PhP 4 Million (\$100,000.00) worth of essential relief goods through the Philippine National Red Cross, for immediate distribution in the most severely affected areas.

The United States stands ready to provide any help that we can in the wake of this tragedy.

GIBBONS